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Student achievement cannot be taken for granted; It is possible when adult advisers guide and support students in the direction of their dreams.

Good afternoon; I am Jaime Williamson the 2008-09 New Jersey FCCLA State President.

Family, Career and Community Leaders of America, FCCLA, is a nonprofit career and technical student organization that has its roots in Family and Consumer Sciences education. Active membership in this organization sets students on a course for success as teens strive to make a difference in their families, schools, the workplace and the community. With the help of our advisers, Family and Consumer Sciences teachers, members develop leadership and give service. Through FCCLA, members develop skills for life through character development, creative and critical thinking, interpersonal communication, practical knowledge, and career preparation.

FCCLA has eight purposes; the second of the eight purposes of FCCLA is to strengthen the function of the family as a basic unit of society. Unlike any other CTSO, FCCLA puts family at its central focus. With all the alcohol, drugs and violence that surround teens today, it is important to have core family values to keep young people on track.

Statistics show that family time such as family dinners have a significant impact on student success. FCCLA encourages this kind of family involvement.

Members have the opportunity to explore a variety of career options through FCCLA. By participating in FCCLA's competitive events such as Career Investigation, Culinary Arts, Fashion Design, Early Childhood Teaching, Hospitality or Interior Design, students get a feel for careers that they may be interested in pursuing. There are also events that put students in real-life situations. For example, Job Interview participants go through a job interview simulation experience and the Entrepreneurship participants develop a product and a marketing plan for the product. Many of the FCCLA events provide members with the opportunity to apply for various scholarships that are associated with post secondary institutions related to specific career areas such as the Culinary Institute of America and Johnson and Wales University.

Community involvement is a major part of FCCLA. Members across the country participate in the annual National Outreach Project. This past year, FCCLA members raised over \$200,000.00 for Feed the Children. Last year, through the efforts of the local chapters, New Jersey FCCLA collectively raised over \$10,000 for Feed the Children. We were able to bring a Feed the Children Truck into Camden with food and supplies for 400 families. This experience changed the lives of many members who helped unload and distribute this food. At the very least, it made teens appreciate their own circumstances while trying to make a difference in the lives of those less fortunate. This gigantic community service effort was done to honor a deceased FCCLA chapter adviser from Camden High School who lived a life of service and made a

difference in the lives of her students. I have given you a CD that recorded some of the events of our Feed the Children event. It is a tribute to the power of New Jersey CTSO service efforts.

FCCLA prepares young people to function as strong members of society. Members can pursue leadership positions in their local chapter, on the state executive council, or even at the national level. Next week, New Jersey FCCLA State officers will be traveling to Washington DC, where they will meet with their senators and congressmen, and discuss issues important to teens that include career education, health issues, traffic safety, community service and the changing roles of men and women in the home and the workplace. Advocacy with government officials is an experience that most teens and adults never experience. At the FCCLA conferences, members learn to network with people from all over the country, which is an important skill to have when entering the workforce. Students are also encouraged to develop goals and action plans that are key skills for personal and career success.

Through FCCLA, young people are able to discover their strengths, motivate others, and contribute to the community. The organization has over 220,000 members nationwide, and anyone who has taken an FCS course can join. FCCLA, the Ultimate Leadership Experience, gives young people skills that are not necessarily taught in a traditional classroom experience and these opportunities shape their future and lead them on a path to success.

As the State President of New Jersey FCCLA, I understand and appreciate the opportunities given to all the student members in our state due to the support from the State Board of Education and the Department of Education. I am here to tell you that your support and encouragement and that of our local districts and advisers has been the "wind beneath our wings." New Jersey FCCLA members who competed at the 2008 National Leadership Meeting in Florida this last summer earned 55 gold medals, 22 silver medals and 2 bronze medals. Our state association is one of only 14 states out of the 53 state and territorial associations who was able to raise enough money to bring a Feed the Children Truck to their home state. In addition, many of our members were awarded scholarships and are pursuing post-secondary degrees in their chosen field of study. FCCLA is able to achieve so much because the adult leaders in this state believe in their students.

Thank you for your support of FCCLA and Family and Consumer Sciences education.